



Senator Melissa Hurtado

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 14

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Senator Melissa Hurtado Introduces Bipartisan Supported Legislation to Invest \$400 Million to Fix Friant-Kern Canal

Restoring Water Supply in the Central Valley

PORTERVILLE, CA – Senator Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger), representing the 14th Senate District in California, along with principal co-authors Senator Andreas Borgeas (R-Fresno), Assemblymember Devon Mathis (R-Visalia), Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno), and Assemblymember Rudy Salas (D-Bakersfield), today announced the introduction of Senate Bill 559. The bipartisan supported legislation will secure California's water supply by investing \$400 million in general funds towards the Friant-Kern Canal, one of the Central Valley's most critical water delivery facilities.

Currently, the Friant-Kern Canal's conveyance capacity has degraded due to several factors, including severe land subsidence caused by regional groundwater overdraft. A portion of the canal, roughly 20 miles long, has subsided twelve feet below its original design elevation, including three feet of subsidence from 2014 – 2017. As a result, the canal has suffered the loss of 60 percent of its carrying capacity – constricting the delivery of water to some of California's most vulnerable communities.

"From 2012 – 2016, California experienced one of the most severe drought conditions. As a result, many of our farmers, families and entire communities within the Central Valley continue to experience limited access to one of their most fundamental rights – clean water," stated Senator Hurtado.

"The Valley's socioeconomic health depends on the conveyance of clean and safe water. Not only does this canal support nearly 1.2 million acres of family farms in California, but it provides one in every five jobs directly related to agriculture," continued Senator Hurtado.



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“For this reason, I am proud to stand with my colleagues to introduce SB 559. This legislation prioritizes our most disadvantaged communities by restoring water supply in the Central Valley.”

“The Friant-Kern Canal has lost 60 percent of its carrying capacity in some locations. This problem threatens about 350,000 acres of highly productive farmland below the damaged portion of the canal, and also limit opportunities to maximize groundwater recharge projects that will be very important to helping the Valley comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act,” said Jason Phillips, CEO, Friant Water Authority. “On behalf of the farmers, businesses and communities who rely on the Friant-Kern Canal, we very much appreciate Senator Hurtado’s leadership on this legislation.”

“Today, we are fighting for the future of the Central Valley, and I am pleased to join my colleagues in this bipartisan effort and support funding for the Friant-Kern Canal,” said Senator Borgeas. “Valley farmers and our communities depend on this infrastructure to ensure a reliable supply of water. By restoring the canal to its full operational state, we ensure the delivery of clean and reliable water supply to our communities and farmers. This investment in our water infrastructure is long overdue and critical for our valley.”

“California faces a stark reality when it comes to water,” said Assemblymember Arambula. “Scarce water supplies, aging infrastructure and a growing population are some of the stressors on our state’s water system. That is why we need real-time solutions to our long-term water challenges. Restoring the Friant-Kern Water Canal will help us protect our existing water supply while we work on reaching sustainable solutions that will get water out to our communities.”

“SB 559 is crucial to keep the Friant-Kern Canal, the largest artery for water on the eastside of the Valley, afloat. This measure is extremely important to keeping this economic engine which powers our economy and provides tremendous benefit locally, statewide and even nationally. Failing to fix the Friant-Kern Canal is not an option, simply because having water is never an option. I am proud to coauthor this measure with Senator Hurtado and look forward to bringing this funding to the Valley,” said Assemblymember Mathis.



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"Water is the lifeblood of the Valley and the backbone of California's economy. Senate Bill 559 is a step towards bringing the Friant-Kern Canal to its full capacity and addressing the State's critical water needs. This measure will invest in our future by building water infrastructure projects and helping our local water districts fulfill their sustainable groundwater management plans," stated Assemblymember Salas.

"On behalf of the City of Porterville, I am very appreciative of our leaders' efforts and support by introducing SB 559," said Porterville Mayor Martha Flores. "The Friant-Kern Canal is the lifeblood to the southeastern San Joaquin Valley, and the canal being fully-efficient with the ability to carry surface water to its designed capacity is essential, especially in consideration of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act," continued Mayor Flores. "The Friant-Kern Canal plays a valuable strategic role in the sustainability of Porterville as the city seeks to enhance its surface water recharge program and reduce its groundwater footprint."

"We need to be at the forefront of this issue, taking every tactical approach possible to secure our water supply," stated Tulare County Supervisor Eddie Valero. "Sadly, the drought has impacted our rural communities significantly. That is why legislation like SB 559 is needed. This bill directly addresses the issues while raising awareness about all the various communities that are impacted by limited access to clean water."

"Our valley is a special place, full of hard-working people with promise and opportunity. To protect our jobs and communities, however, we must fix our water infrastructure," said Edwin Camp, President, D.M. Camp & Sons. "Just like the technology industry powers the economy in the Silicon Valley and the entertainment industry drives the economy in Hollywood, water is the lifeblood of the Valley economy. And a healthy, productive and sustainable valley matters to California."

"The Friant-Kern Canal was specifically designed to carry water to recharge basins that help maintain stable groundwater levels," said Jon Parker, General Manager of the Kern Water Bank Authority. "In addition, many of the recharge basins that receive water from the canal support habitat for migratory waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway. By providing funds to repair the canal, SB 559 will preserve and possibly expand existing habitat opportunities."



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The 152 mile canal, which runs from Friant Dam to the Kern River in Bakersfield, conveys water for groundwater storage and clean drinking water for some of the state's most vulnerable communities. Moreover, the canal provides irrigation for more than 18,000 individual family farms– almost a quarter of the Valley's agriculture land and 22 percent of all farms in California.

For more information, go to <https://sd14.senate.ca.gov/>.

About Senator Melissa Hurtado

Senator Melissa Hurtado is an advocate for expanding access to health care and clean water, growing educational opportunities and creating more quality jobs. She represents the 14th Senate District in California, which includes cities in Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare counties. Senator Hurtado was born in Fresno, California and was raised in the City of Sanger, where she still resides with her family.

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